

BEFORE  
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DOCKET NO. 92-110-C - ORDER NO. 2005-414  
AUGUST 2, 2005

IN RE: Dual Party Relay

) ORDER DECREASING  
) MONTHLY ACCESS  
) CHARGE, ADDING NEW  
) SERVICE TO THE  
) PROGRAM, AND  
) APPROVING BUDGET

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the Commission) for consideration of a recommendation from the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) which would decrease the monthly access charge for support of dual party relay from \$.16 per month to \$.15 per month. Further, the ORS seeks approval of a new service for the program, and approval of a new budget. We would note that the ORS has taken over administration of this fund from the Commission.

With regard to the reduction in the monthly access charge, S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-2530(A) (Supp. 2004) states that the Commission may require all local exchange telephone companies operating in this State to impose a monthly charge not to exceed twenty-five (25) cents on all residential and business local exchange access facilities as necessary to fund the operation of the dual party relay system in South Carolina. The statute goes on to state that the amount of the charge must be determined by the Commission based upon the amount of funding necessary to accomplish the purposes of the article and provide dual party telephone relay services on a continuous

basis. In keeping with Section 58-9-2530(A) (Supp. 2004) this Commission has approved a series of adjustments to the surcharge. Currently the surcharge is \$0.16 per month per line. Analysis submitted by ORS indicates a current surplus, which would increase if the current surcharge is maintained for the next fiscal year. ORS has submitted a budget, which calls for a reduction in the surcharge from \$0.16 to \$0.15 per month per line. After taking this reduction into consideration, the fund maintains sufficient contingency and reserve funds to allow for expense overruns or revenue underruns due to reductions in total access lines in South Carolina.

We have therefore examined projects approved for funding in the near future. After due deliberation, we believe that, at this time, the monthly access charge should be decreased from \$.16 to \$.15. We hold that this amount will accomplish the purpose of the article and provide dual party telephone relay services on a continuous basis. We note that, if necessary, we can reexamine this decrease at a later date using these statutory criteria.

In addition, ORS requests that we approve the addition of the CapTel Service to the current program. This will allow evaluation of the CapTel service and equipment for a total of 12 months beginning July 1, 2005, and ending June 30, 2006, with the possibility that the time frame may be adjusted, due to required approvals and contract development. ORS states that CapTel users place a call in the same way as dialing a traditional telephone. As users dial, the CapTel automatically connects to a captioning service. When the called party answers, the CapTel user hears everything that the called party says, just like a traditional call. A specially trained operator at the captioning


service transcribes everything that the called party says into written text, using voice-recognition technology. The captions appear almost simultaneously with the spoken word, allowing CapTel users to understand everything that is said, either by hearing it or by reading it. It appears to this Commission that this program is very worthwhile, and that it is in the public interest to approve the addition of the CapTel Service to the current program. We approve the addition of this Service under the conditions proposed by ORS.

Further, ORS has submitted a budget for funding the dual party relay service for 2005. The budget appears to be reasonable, and we therefore approve it as filed. However, in the future, ORS shall prepare annual budgets incorporating multi-year projections for planning purposes, so that we may see projected costs for future time frames.

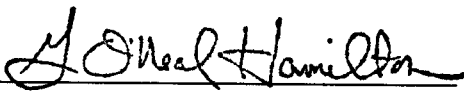
Accordingly, with regard to the decrease in the monthly access charge, we hereby order all Local Exchange Carriers, including incumbent carriers and competitive carriers, to decrease the monthly access fee billed to each access line for the support of the dual party relay system from \$.16 to \$.15 per month as soon as it is technically feasible. We instruct the Office of Regulatory Staff to monitor this account, so that this Commission can decide whether additional adjustments should be made in the future. In addition, we approve the addition of the CapTel Service to the current program, and we approve the 2005 budget as filed.

This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

  
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Randy Mitchell, Chairman

ATTEST:

  
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G. O'Neal Hamilton, Vice-Chairman

(SEAL)